State Government of Assam in pursuance to Clause 6 of the Assam Accord, *inter-alia*, requesting for a special status for Assam akin to that of J &K. The Assam Accord does not mention special status for Assam nor have the Government made any commitment in this regard. As such, there is no question of a special status for Assam. Clause 6 speaks of providing Constitutional, legislative and administrative safeguards, as may be appropriate, to protect, preserve and promote the cultural, social, linguistic identity and heritage of the Assamese people. The Departments of Education & Culture have been requested to take necessary steps to protect, preserve and promote the cultural, social, linguistic identity and heritage of the Assamese people, and these Departments are taking|have initiated the following steps:—

(i) Programmes for training of school teachers in Assamese Language.

(ii) Training of officers of the State Bank of India in Assamese Language and refresher course for the Assamese teachers in the National Policy Academy.

(iii) Preparation of cassette courses in Assamese for promotion & learning of Assamese by non-Assamese speaking population.

(iv) Undertaking publications, and organising workshop and seminars on Assamese.

(v) Consideration of a proposal to set up North Eastern Research Extension Centre of CIIL, Mysore, at Guwahati.

(vi) Providing financial assistance for promotion of tribal and folk art and culture under the ongoing schemes.

(vii) Opening a sub-centre of North Eastern Cultural Zonal Centre in Assam.

(viii) Examination of a suggestion to set up a Tribal Sangeet Natak Academy in Assam for research and development of music, art and culture of the tribal people of Assam.

The State Government would be well advised to submit proposals which are directly relatable to the objectives explicitly stated in Clause 6 of the Accord and are broadly within the basic structure of the Constitution.

As regards Clause 7 of the Accord, the Central Government are giving due consideration for the speedy all round economic development of Assam and Assam's 7th Plan Outlay has been finalised at Rs. 2,100 crores as against the 6th Plan Outlay of Rs. 1,115 crores. The Plan would be almost wholly financed through Central Assistance amounting to Rs. 2,065 crores. Decisions to set up an oil refinery in Assam in the public sector and an IIT have already been taken in pursuance of the Assam Accord and the Government has also rendered assistance to the State Government of Assam in their efforts to re-open the Ashok Paper Mill and the Jute Mill. The Planning Commission have also identified some more areas schemes|proposals on which action can be taken up for speedier development.

No legislation for fulfilling the commitments under Clauses 6 & 7 of the Assam Accord are contemplated at present.

Allocation for imports

*292. PROF. C. LAKSHMANNA: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) what is the level of import in the current financial year;

(b) what are the allocations for these imports itemwise;

(c) whether it is a fact that major portion of these imports are for the favoured sectors in the economy, more particularly for the sectors which help multi-nationals; and

(d) what items would be encouraged apart from edible oils which would help the consumption level for the weaker sections?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AFFAIRS IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI EDUARDO FALEIRO): (a) According to provisional trade data, the imports during the first nine months of the current financial year (i.e. April-December, 1987) stood at Rs. 16111 crores.

(b) and (d) Import of various items is governed by the provisions of the Import-Export Policy and as such the question of making allocations for each and every item imported into the country does not arise. The import of major bulk commodities of mass consumption is decided on the basis of the Government's assessment of the gap between demand and indigenous availability of these items from time to time and other relevant factors and the necessary foreign exchange releases are made to the State Canalising Agencies to arrange these imports.

(c) No, Sir.

Pension to widows of freedom fighters

*293. SHRI CHIMANBHAI MEHTA: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the widows of freedom fighters are also eligible for pensions;

(b) whether it is also a fact that Government have not yet cleared the proposal to extend First Class Railway Pass facilities to the widows of freedom fighters; if so, what are the reasons for the delay;

(c) by when this proposal is likely to be cleared;

(d) whether Government are considering to give other benefits to the freedom fighters and their widows; if so, what are the details thereof; and

(e) whether Government would consider issuing Railway Passes for freedom fighters for Bharat Darshan once in life time?

THE MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI BUTA SINGH): (a) Yes, Sir, widows whose late husbands fulfil the requirements of the Swatantrata Sainik Samman Pension Scheme are eligible for pension.

(b) and (c) The Scheme as conceived at the instance of the late Prime Minister, Smt. Indira Gandhi is aimed at providing a one-time opportunity to freedom fighters during their life time to visit places of their choice along with respective spouse|one companion for a period of one year from the date of issue. There is, therefore, no provision in the Scheme for giving free railway passes to widows of freedom fighters.

(d) Freedom Fighters in receipt of Central pension are given benefits like Monthly Pension, Railway Card Pass for unlimited free travel by A.C. 2 tier|first Class by train for a period of one year from the date of issue for the freedom fighter and his spouse|one companion and free medical facilities in Central Government hospitals at par with Group 'A' officers of the Central Government. In addition the respective State Governments are giving various facilities. Recently a Scheme for free voyage to Andaman & Nicobar Islands for freedom fighters in receipt of Central pension and his spouse| one companion has also been introduced.

(e) As mentioned above in (d), Government are already issuing free railway passes for unlimited travel for a period of one year from the date of issue to freedom fighters receiving Central Pension. The Scheme which was initially operative from 19.11.1986 to 18.11.1987 has been extended upto 18.11.1988. The validity of passes, however, remain one year from the date of issue. This extended facility applies only to those freedom fighters who had not availed of this facility earlier.

World Bank loan for Development of Sericulture

*294. SHRI SUNIL BASU RAY:
SHRI RAMNARAYAN GOSWAMI:

Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state: